Floating Piers, Cargo Ship With Aid for Gaza Face Weather Delays



MEDITERRANEAN SEA (April 26, 2024) U.S. military personnel work on construction of the floating Joint Logistics Over the Sea (JLOTS) pier in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of the Gaza Strip, April 26, 2024. The pier will support the delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. (U.S. Navy photo)
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Construction of the Joint Logistics Over-the-Shore, or JLOTS, system on the Mediterranean Sea, which will streamline delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza, is now complete, the deputy Pentagon press secretary said today.

“The U.S. military has completed the offshore construction of the Trident pier section, or ‘the causeway,’ which is the component that will eventually be anchored to the Gaza shore,”

said Sabrina Singh during a briefing today. “As I mentioned last week, construction of the floating pier section has also been completed. So as of today, the construction of the two portions of the JLOTS – the floating pier and the Trident pier – are complete and awaiting final movement offshore.”

At the same time, she said, the cargo ship MV Sagamore is at port in Cyprus being loaded with humanitarian aid supplies bound for Gaza.

“The Sagamore is a cargo vessel that will use the JLOTS system and will make trips between Cyprus and the offshore floating pier as USAID and other partners collect aid from around the world,” she said.

Singh explained that the Sagamore, a commercial ship registered in the U.S., will be loaded with humanitarian aid in Cyprus and will then travel from Cyprus to a temporary floating pier several miles off the coast of Gaza. There, at sea, cargo will be unloaded from the Sagamore onto trucks that are onboard Army-owned landing craft utility ships, or LCUs, and logistic support vessels, or LSVs.

The Army ships will then travel toward Gaza where they will meet up with the Trident pier. There, the trucks onboard the LCUs and LSVs will drive onto the pier and onto the shore of Gaza where the humanitarian aid supplies can then be staged for delivery inside Gaza.

It’s expected that initially about 90 truckloads of supplies will transit the causeway each day and make their way into Gaza. When the operation reaches full capacity, as many as 150 trucks will make their way into Gaza daily.

“I think what you’re going to see at the very beginning is a ‘crawl, walk, run’ scenario,” Singh said. “We’re going to start with an additional small amount of aid trucks to flow in to make sure that the system works, that the distribution works, and then you’ll see that increase … when we get to full

operational capacity."

While the JLOTS system may eventually deliver substantial capacity, Singh said it's neither the only way nor the best way to get much-needed supplies into Gaza.

"The best way through those land routes, and we do want to see those opened up," she said. "We do want to see aid continue to flow in through those land crossings. This is just one It's meant to help augment, to help complement, other ways that aid can get in."

The Gaza Strip, which is about 25 miles long, lies entirely inside Israel and shares a border to the south with Egypt. There are three locations along its border where humanitarian supplies could move into Gaza from either Egypt or Israel. Those locations include the Erez crossing in northern Gaza and the Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Gaza. Both of those crossings connect Gaza to Israel. The Rafah crossing is on the Gaza border with Egypt.

Since March 2, U.S. Central Command, in coordination with the Royal Jordanian Air Force, has carried out nearly 40 humanitarian missions to airdrop nearly 1,200 tons of humanitarian assistance into Gaza.

While the JLOTS construction is now complete, that capability has not yet been deployed due to weather conditions, Singh said. Right now, the two piers are floating on the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Israel near the Port of Ashdod – about 18 miles north of Gaza. Weather conditions, Singh said, prevent moving either of them to their final location.

"Late last week, Centcom temporarily paused moving the floating pier and Trident pier toward the vicinity of Gaza due to sea state considerations," she said. "Today there are still forecasted high winds and high sea swells, which are causing unsafe conditions for the JLOTS components to be moved."